

## **OVERVIEW**

### **I. Background**

Threats imposed by disasters make it imperative that all communities have a rapid, reliable, and efficient method of warning the public. The National Warning System (NAWAS) is a special purpose telephone system which provides a voice communications capability suited for disseminating warnings to Federal, State, and local government agencies and selected military organizations.

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq. (Stafford Act), authorizes the President to make provisions for emergency preparedness communications and dissemination of warnings to governmental authorities and the civilian population in areas endangered by disasters. This authority was delegated to the Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). As such, FEMA funds, operates, and controls the NAWAS.

NAWAS was originally established to rapidly notify emergency management officials of an impending or threatened attack or accidental missile launch on the United States. This is still a major priority of the NAWAS. However, with the ending of the Cold War, FEMA has placed primary emphasis on an all-hazard approach to emergency management to support rapid and effective response to natural and technological disasters. As such, the NAWAS was envisioned as being particularly suited for disseminating peacetime civil emergency warnings to state and local governments, who are responsible for further fanout of warnings to other communities and the general public.

The National Warning System (NAWAS) is a key component of the State's "all hazard" warning system. What it is and how it's employed within the state is discussed in the following paragraphs, tabs, and attachments.

### **II. National Warning System (NAWAS)**

#### **A. General Description**

The National Warning System (NAWAS) is the special purpose telephone system that provides the capability for selective dissemination of warnings and emergency information nationwide, within Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional areas, within National Weather Service (NWS) regional forecast areas, and within statewide areas.

The primary National Warning Center (NWC) is the FEMA Operations Center (FOC) located at the Mt. Weather Emergency Assistance Center in Berryville, Virginia. The alternate NWC is the FEMA Alternate Operations

Center (FAOC) located within the Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) Operations Center (MOC) in Thomasville, Georgia. The FEMA Region X Warning Center is located in Bothell, WA. For Washington, the primary and alternate State Warning Points (SWP) are located in Camp Murray and Yakima, respectively.

Through NAWAS, essential warning and emergency information can be initiated either at the federal level, state level, or local level.

**Federal** level initiation is done through the FOC or FAOC. If emergency is regional in nature, the appropriate FEMA Regional Warning Center will initiate the warning.

**State** level initiation is done through the SWP (State Emergency Management) or Alternate SWP (WSP Communications Center, Yakima).

**Local** level initiation is done through the local warning point with assistance provided by the SWP, which controls the statewide portion of NAWAS.

## B. Types of Civil Emergency Warnings Supported by NAWAS

### 1. Natural and Technological Emergency Warning.

These are warnings of a natural or technological disaster or emergency, which may include any of the following events:

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| - Aircraft crash                 | - Storms                  |
| - Domestic errant missile launch | - Tornados                |
| - Drought                        | - Tsunami                 |
| - Earthquake                     | - Volcanic eruption       |
| - Explosion                      | - Civil disorder          |
| - Fire                           | - Landslide or mudslide   |
| - Flooding                       | - Nuclear accidents       |
| - Hazardous chemical spills      | - Reentering space debris |
| - Hurricane                      |                           |

Other potential or actual hazards to the public's health, safety, and property

### 2. Attack Warning.

A warning meaning that an impending or actual attack or accidental missile launch against the United States has been detected and that protective action should be taken immediately.

3.     Fallout Warning.

A warning meaning that potential radiation hazards exist resulting from nuclear detonations, accidental mishaps and/or terrorist activities.

C.     Agencies that support and employ NAWAS to disseminate information on the above include:

- National Weather Service (Weather Forecast Offices located throughout the nation)
- National Severe Storms Forecast Center
- Tsunami Warning Centers in Alaska and Hawaii
- National Hurricane Centers (Atlantic and Pacific)
- Office of Hydrology
- National Earthquake Information Center
- National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP)
- Air Force Rescue Coordination Center (AFRCC)
- State Emergency Management Division

**III.    NAWAS in Washington**

A.     Circuits and Signaling

There are two circuits that make up the state's portion of NAWAS.

1.     The national circuit (Telco number PLLJ-8229-067), ties federal, military, and state warning points together.
2.     The state circuit (Telco number PLLJ-8229-068), ties state and local warning points together, and also allows both to hear the national circuit.

All designated NAWAS warning points within the state employ the NAWAS telephone procured by FEMA from Comlabs, Inc. Dual Tone Multi-frequency (DTMF) signaling is used to alert all stations of an incoming message. Additionally, each phone has a visual indicator (red light) which alerts the station user as well. Simultaneous signaling of all warning points within the state can only be accomplished by the State Warning Points and the National Weather Service office in Seattle.

B.     State Warning Point (SWP)

In accordance with the FEMA NAWAS Operations Manual, control and monitoring of the circuits indicated above is maintained at the State Warning Point. Each state is required to operate a 24-hour State Warning

Point (SWP) and maintain an Alternate State Warning Point (ASWP) capable of assuming the SWP functions immediately. In Washington State, the designated 24 hour **Primary State Warning Point (PSWP)** is the **State Emergency Management Division (EMD) Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Camp Murray, Tacoma, WA.** The **Alternate State Warning Point (ASWP)** is the **WSP Communications Center in Yakima, WA.** Both facilities have identical equipment. The governing organization concerning the operational use and maintenance of NAWAS within the state is the EMD.

C. Local Warning Points

1. Primary Warning Points (PWP)

In accordance with FEMA NAWAS Operations Manual, NAWAS local Primary Warning Points (PWP) have been installed throughout the state. Each PWP is required to be staffed on a 24-hour basis and have capabilities to assist local government authorities in disseminating warning information. Currently, there are 30 local PWP's.

Primary Warning Points (Listed alphabetically by Calling Names)

Bellingham	Lewis County
Benton County	Mason County
Boeing Fire	Navy Whidbey
Bonneville Power	Oak Harbor
Bremerton/Kitsap	Pierce County
Chelan County	Quinault Indian Nation
Clallam County	Seattle Weather
Colfax	Skagit County
Ellensburg	Skamania SO
Everett	South Bend
Grand Coulee	Spokane
Grays Harbor County	Thurston County
Hanford EOF	Vancouver
Kelso	Walla Walla
King County	Yakima

2. Duplicate Warning Points

If the local PWP is at risk due to potential disaster, NAWAS local Duplicate Warning Points have been established that could assume the primary role if needed. In Washington State, Duplicate Warning Points are established in 14 locations, primarily in local EOC's either co-located or in close proximity to the PWP.

### Duplicate Warning Points (Listed by Calling Name)

Benton County EOC	Pierce County EOC
Chelan County EOC	Seattle EOC
Clallam County EOC	Skamania County EOC
King County EOC	Snohomish County EOC
Kitsap County Sheriff	Whatcom County EOC
Lewis County EOC	Whitman County EOC
Pacific County EOC	Yakima County EOC

### 3. Secondary Warning Points

As part of the overall state plan for disseminating warning and emergency information statewide, each county that does not have a NAWAS local PWP within its jurisdiction is required to identify a 24 hour facility (sheriff/police, fire dispatch or E9-1-1 center) to serve as a local Secondary Warning Point. Since Secondary Warning Points cannot receive warnings or directly talk to National and State Warning Points, they must rely on a designated local PWP to relay information to them.

### D. Warning Dissemination/Fanout

Within Washington State, National or FEMA Region X warnings and emergency information are received by the SWP and all local PWP's through the national circuit directly from the FEMA Operations Center or FEMA Region X Operations Center.

To ensure national information is received and to disseminate additional information from the state, the SWP, using the state circuit will initiate a statewide fanout. All local Primary or Duplicate Warning Points will be signalled, the information will be passed, and a roll call will be conducted. (See Tab 6, Attachments 3 and 4)

The local warning point (primary or duplicate), as part of their warning responsibility will continue the statewide fanout by contacting designated secondary warning points. (See Tab 4, Statewide Warning Fanout)

Overall, all local warning points, through use of local warning systems are responsible for disseminating information to appropriate government authorities and the general public.

## **IV. Authorizing Legislation and References**

- A. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5121, et seq.

- B. Executive Order 12656, Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities, dated November 18, 1988.
- C. National Warning System Operations Manual, dated June 2000
- D. Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, dated October 1996 with changes.